obuiari possit non sufficiant pro spiritualibus temporalia auxilia sine quibus/periclitantibus rebus fidei subueniri non potest compe[ri?]*re coactus ad infra scripta auct*oritate apostolica nobis tribuit faculta-/tem prout in literis sanctitatis sue datis Rome apu[d]..... ..... *anno incarnacio*nis dominice Millesimo quadringente/simo octuagesimo pridie nonas decembris po[ntificatus sui?] *anno decimo plen*ius continetur, Hinc est quia nos deuocioni/tue seu tibi qui indulgenciarum, eciam ad hoc concess*arum competentem quantitatem secundum teno*rem ipsarum literarum apostolicarum contribuendo/particeps esse voluisti, nec non singuli de famil.....[secul?]arem vel cuiusuis ordinis religiosum elige-/re possis quia confessione tua diligenter audita pro con..... uslibus quantumcumque enormibus, eciam si/talia forent propter quod sedes apostolica [esset?] merito..... .....bus quomodolibus alligatus existi satis-/facto quibus satisfaciendum fuerit semel in vita et [in?]..... .....nsibus tociens quociens id pecieris de abso-/[lucionis?] eo beneficio pro..... in mortis articulo.....[i?] remissionem et absolucionem impendere et/penitenciam salutarem iniungere, ac emissa per te v.....[e?]ncie votis dumtaxat exceptis in huius-/modi sanctam expedicionem contra turchos comutare libere et licite valeat auctoritate apostolica in h[ac?...../concedimus licenciam et facultatem, In quorum omnium et singulorum fidem ponentes sigilli commissionis *indulgenciarum et dispen-*/sacionum sancte cruciate quo ad hoc vtimur iussimus et fecimus appensione communiri Datum /die mensis Anno domini Millesimo quadringentesimo octuagesimo primo *Ac pontificatus prefati*/sanctissimi domini nostri domini Sixti pape quarti anno vndecimo.

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LATRINES AND CESSPOOLS OF MEDIAEVAL LONDON

BY ERNEST L. SABINE

ANTIQUARIANS have written at some length concerning mediaeval *garderobes*, or latrines, found in old English monasteries and in the ancient establishments of the wealthy landed nobility. But they have had little or nothing to say concerning the privies of mediaeval London houses, for the simple reason that they found none extant to study.

Yet examination of mediaeval official and private documents brings to light abundant information concerning such easements, information, indeed, which shows that London citizens were quite as much interested in improving such conveniences as were their wealthy countrymen, and did so up to the limit of their means.

Some of the nobles, it is true, had in their castles *garderobes* for every storey, sometimes one for every room. Often one of the principal towers was given over for this purpose, as in Langley Castle, Northumberland, where four separate *garderobes* were built for each storey, with separate flues for the filth from each passing down through the stonework of the tower to the stream of water flowing through at the bottom. Where such towers could not be used, smaller turrets were often built to serve the purpose. To these *garderobes*, passages in the thickness

of the wall sometimes led from each room of the house, the passages being lighted, even as were the privies, by small loop-hole-like openings. In other cases where there were neither towers nor turrets, privy chambers were 'boldly corbelled out from the face of the wall, as at Broughton Castle, Oxfordshire.' . . . 'Whenever there was a running stream of water in the moat, a portion of it was diverted through the pit of the *garderobe*, as at the Bishop's Palace, Wells; Magdalen College, Oxford; Ragland Castle, and many other places.' Such, in brief, is the information given in Turner and Parker's *Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages*.[1]

But it might be well, as a basis of comparison with latrines of mediaeval London, also to explain the *garderobe* arrangements in various establishments of King Henry III throughout England and in his palace at Westminster. In 1237 a royal writ instructed the Sheriff of Surrey to cause a privy chamber to be made adjoining the King's great chamber on the ground floor at Geldeford and towards the ditch of the castle.[2] If, as is probable, this privy was to be corbelled out from the face of the wall in manner already mentioned, it was a marked improvement over the crude *garderobe* of the eleventh century constructed off the banquet hall of London Tower and within the thickness of the great outer wall so that the filth from it flowed down the outer face into the moat below.[3] The privy at Geldeford would thus have been immediately over the water of the ditch, even as was the King's privy chamber at Westminster at this time, built upon an arch, over the water of the Thames. In 1238 the clerk-of-the-works was ordered to bar the entrance to this arch with strong iron bars so that no one could enter there.[4]

At other times and places, however, other *garderobe* arrangements were made. In 1239 the constable of St Briavels Castle repaired the castle ditch, deepened and widened it, and made a pipe to the ditch, apparently for clearance of filth.[5] In 1340 in the corner of a certain great chamber of the king's in the Tower of London, a great round water tower was made facing the Thames so that the drain from it should descend into the water.[6]

Sometimes, however, the *garderobes*, instead of being built in such turrets, may have been constructed within the thick walls of chimneys. For instance, in 1238, the king ordered the sheriff of Southampton to make in Winchester Castle a fire-place and a privy within a certain chamber.[7] Again in 1239, he ordered the chimney of the king's wardrobe at Clarendon to be pulled down and a new one to be made. At the same time the privy chamber was to be renewed and enlarged and a wardrobe the length of thirty feet was to be built before it.[8] Assuredly there is suggested here some intimate structural interdependence of chimney and privy. Within the thick walls of chimneys, flues for the passage

[1] Fourteenth century vol. (Oxford, John Henry Parker, 1851), pp. 113–115.

[2] *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls*, preserved in the Public Record Office, i, 301.

[3] Dent and Hillyer, *Under Eight Reigns; George* I *to George* V, (London, 1930), p. 1 .

[4] *Calendar of the Close Rolls*, preserved in the Public Record Office (Rolls Series, 1911), 22 Henry III, p. 99.

[5] *Calendar of Liberate Rolls* (hereafter written, *Cal. Lib. Rolls*), I, 386, 426.

[6] *Ibid.*, I, 453. [7] *Ibid.*, I, 350. [8] *Ibid.*, I, 417.

of filth could have been easily and conveniently made. Moreover such privies would have been warm and cosy places during cold winter weather.

Where there was no running stream within a castle ditch for the clearance of privy filth, the king seems to have had recourse, as did the people of London, to the sinking of a great well or cesspool. In 1239 instructions were given for the making of a great well at Everswell and for the tearing down of the private chamber of the king's wardrobe so that it might be rebuilt in such a manner as to serve the king's wardrobe and that of the queen, which was directly below it.[1] Possibly this was to be a two-story privy voiding into a great cesspool.

Finally in 1259–60 a really great improvement was inaugurated for the voidance of fifth from Westminster Palace. The conduit bringing water to the king's lavatory and other places in the palace was repaired, and an underground sewer was constructed to carry away the filth from the royal kitchens so as not to corrupt the air of the halls as hitherto by having it carried through.[2] Now, although there is here no mention of any such sewer, or sewers, having been constructed to serve the *garderobes* of the palace, such drains actually were built either as early as this time or else shortly afterwards; for about 1307 the sewers 'ascending' into the palace from the Thames for the voiding of the kitchens and the various *garderobes* of the king, the queen, and other magnates were found to be blocked up with filth and to be broken in various places. Orders were therefore given for them to be dug out and fully cleaned and repaired.[3]

By way of summary, the types of privies, so far mentioned, were built as follows: (1) within the thickness of castle walls, as in London Tower; (2) within towers; (3) within turrets; (4) within chimneys; (5) within chambers corbelled out over the water of the moats; (6) within chambers on arches over the water; (7) with pipe drains to the moats; and (8) with cesspools to receive their filth. The two-fold purpose governing the construction of such privies seems to have been, on the one hand, to make them as conveniently accessible as possible, and, on the other hand, to obviate as much as possible the evil odors arising from privy filth.

Doubtless some of the suggested interpretations of data concerning king's *garderobes* will as yet appear insufficiently convincing; but a study of the different types of latrines found in mediaeval London will bring forth abundant evidence that almost all such types were then in common use.

As to the existence within the city of London of the more pretentious types of *garderobes* of the castles and the king's palaces (those constructed in towers and turrets) there is little direct documentary evidence. Yet it is highly probable that such actually did exist within some of the more wealthy establishments either of prominent merchant citizens or else of nobles and of royalty. For in-instance, in 1367, seven aldermen and six commoners were elected by the city authorities to view a certain gutter flowing within (*infra*) the palace of the Bishop

[1] *Cal. Lib. Rolls*, I, 414–415.

[2] *Lib. Roll*, 44 Henry III, m 7 and m 9.

[3] *Exchequer Accounts*, E, 468, no. 15.

of London and through (*per*) the *garderobe* of the king. This gutter had become filled with divers ordure and filth, to the grave annoyance of the king, of the Bishop of London, and of divers others.[1] Here would seem to have been a flowing stream, probably an underground sewer, even as were the drains from Westminster Palace (or else why should it have become blocked up?) serving to clear the filth from the privies of a number of wealthy and titled inhabitants. With such a stream of water available it would have been quite possible to have had *garderobe* towers or turrets such as have already been described. Moreover at other places within the city limits there was an abundance of flowing water that might have been utilized for passing sluices of water through such towers and turrets — in Walbrook, the Fleet, the city ditch or moat, and the Thames — and all of these, indeed, were utilized for a long time for clearance of filth from at least certain types of privies.

Perhaps the best known among privies provided with running water for clearance of filth were the public latrines of the city. The early establishment of such public conveniences seems to have been not merely for the relief of the floating business population, but rather primarily for the benefit of those householders and tenants who had access to no private latrines. Incidents bearing out this inference are not lacking. In 1290–91 a certain John de Abyndon was killed while coming by night from a common privy situated in London wall within Cripplegate Ward at the head of Philipslane.[2] Again, in 1312–13, a certain man of Cheap Ward while coming by night from a common privy in London wall through Ironmongerslane, met another man with whom he quarrelled so that one of them was killed.[3] Even at a much later date, in 1579, inquiries on the part of a certain constable revealed that fifty-seven households within Tower Street in the Parish of All Hallows, containing in all eighty-five people had for their convenience only three privies.[4] These households, of course, were tenements, mainly St Katherine's rents, and others in the neighboring alleys. The owners of such rents usually provided only one large common latrine to serve a whole group of tenants.

Sometimes, however, even one common latrine was not provided. For instance, a wardmote inquest for Basinghall Ward in 1421 reported that all the little rents of the Swan, belonging to Richard Clark, were without privies, so that all the tenants threw their ordure and other horrible liquids before their doors, to the great nuisance of holy church and of passers-by.[5] Clearly, then, certain householders were forced regularly to use the public latrines, a fact which will be still further elucidated in dealing with London Bridge.

On the other hand, one incident reveals strong public opinion in favor of the wayfaring population using the public conveniences instead of relieving them-

[1] *Letter-book* G, preserved in the archives of the Guildhall Record Office (London), fol. cxc^{v}.

[2] *Assize Rolls*, preserved in the Pub. Rec. Off. (London), 547^{a}, m 29^{v}. (Two entries on same fol.)

[3] *Ibid.*, m 41^{r}.

[4] *Survey of London*, issued by the Joint Pub. Committee representing the London County Council and the London Survey Committee, ed. Montagu H. Cox and Philip Norman (London, pub. for London C. C. by B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1929), xii, 40.

[5] *Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, preserved in the archives of the Guildhall Rec. Off. (London), A 50, m 4^{v}.

selves in the streets. In 1307 Thomas Scott, groom of the prince, was fined in the mayor's court for quarrelling with two citizens and violently assaulting one of them, because they had protested against his stopping, not evidently in a frequented thoroughfare, but in a certain lane, when it would have been 'more decent' for him to have gone to the common privies of the city.[1]

If, then, citizens so commonly used the public latrines, how many such conveniences were there? Writers upon the subject usually mention only three: one on Temple Bridge (or pier) south of Fleet Street, one at Queenhithe, and one on London Bridge. The Temple Bridge latrine, built over the water of the Thames and well covered, with four apertures, was, according to official statement in 1360, bound to be maintained by the Prior of St John of Jerusalem, the then occupant of the Temple.[2] The latrine at Queenhithe had clearance of filth by means of a stream of water (evidently an open sewer) coming from the high street through a passage between two houses and flowing through beneath the latrine.[3]

London Bridge, however, had not merely one common latrine, as has been commonly assumed, but several 'necessary houses or wardrobes' for the convenience both of the tenants of the houses built on the bridge and of other people resorting to the place. Whether these privies were situated in several places widely apart, better to accommodate the people, or were all close together, one cannot say. But the following facts have come to light. Already in 1306 the bridge had a quite commodious privy with at least two entrances, for in that year a certain man escaped his creditor by going out one of its doors, after leaving the creditor waiting for his return at the other.[4] In 1377 divers persons living around the bridge or resorting thereto complained that the 'necessary houses or wardrobes' were in a dangerous state of disrepair, with the result that immediate steps were taken to have the bridge wardens make the necessary restorations.[5] In 1382–83 a new latrine costing no less than £11 — the equivalent in money of three hundred and sixty two days' wages of a skilled workman receiving the usual 7d a day — was built at the end of London Bridge,[6] possibly near the Thames in the Parish of St Magnus, since a latrine was situated there in 1387–88;[7] and in 1411–12 a key was bought for the latrine under the counter house on the bridge.[8] The latter house may have been reserved for the use of the bridge officials.

Taking the evidence in its entirety, one gets the impression that latrines on London Bridge were conveniences of no inconsiderable size and importance. The

[1] *Calendar of Early Mayors' Court Rolls*, preserved among archives of the Corporation of the City of London, at the Guildhall, A.D. 1298–1307, edited by A. H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1924), p. 255.

[2] *Memorials of London and London Life . . . A.D. 1275–1419*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London, 1868), p. 306.

[3] *Liber Custumarum*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley, M.A. (London, *Rolls Series*, 1859), II, Part I, Introd., p. cxii; Part II, 451.

[4] *Cal. Early Mayors' Court Rolls*, p. 247.

[5] *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, preserved in the archives of the Guildhall Rec. Off., ed. A. H. Thomas (Cambridge: University Press, 1929), II, 237 f.

[6] *Accounts of the Masters of London Bridge Estate*, preserved in the archives of the Guildhall Rec. Off. (London), Roll 2, m 11r.

[7] *Hustings Rolls*, preserved in the archives of the Guildhall Rec. Off. (London), 116 (65).

[8] *Acc'ts of Mast. Lond. Bdge. Est., Week Book* I, 312, 328.

necessity for their being so is clear, since as early as 1358 there were already one hundred and thirty-eight shops on the bridge,[1] and since, according to the complaint of 1377, certain people living around the bridge, as well as those resorting to it, for business or pleasure, were also dependent upon its privies.

There were, however, many other public latrines besides those at (1) Temple Bridge, (2) Queenhithe, and (3) London Bridge. (4) The one in London Wall at the head of Philipslane in Cripplegate Ward has already been mentioned.[2] (5) Another common latrine outside the wall over Walbrook was, according to an ordinance of 1415, to be removed,[3] and (6) a new one was to be built within the wall upon the foss of Walbrook, where a 'scluys' or 'speye' was to be constructed for the purpose of carrying out the filth.[4] (7) The same ordinance provided for the abolition of another latrine situated in the city wall between the Church of All Hallows and Bishopsgate. (8) The latrine in London Wall from which a certain man of Cheap Ward came at night (1312–13) along Ironmongerslane cannot be definitely located.[5] It may have been one of those already mentioned, or it may have been an additional common privy. (9) The common privy of Broad Street Ward mentioned in 1422–23 as having two dunghills beside it, which were a great nuisance,[6] may, of course, have been the one mentioned as situated near All Hallows Church, or again it may have been a second common convenience within the ward. (10) The privy in London Wall from which ordure came through Walbrook in 1422–23,[7] seven years after the Walbrook privy outside the walls was to have been removed, may have been a new privy, or it may have been merely the old one still left standing. All these London Wall latrines had ready clearance of filth by means of running water of the city moat or of Walbrook. (11) The common privy of Ludgate, reported in 1421–22 by the wardmote of Faringdon Without as being in a perilous state, through the ordure rotting the stone walls, was probably situated at the foot of Ludgate Hill over Fleet Stream.[8] (12) Another common privy, however, standing by Fenchurch Cemetery, Langborne Ward, had evidently only a deep cesspool for its filth; for a wardmote inquest in 1421 reported the privy as broken and open, to the danger of adults and children at night.[9] (13) In 1401–11 the wardens of London Bridge built what were doubtless large public latrines in their new Stocks Market in the east end of Cheap Street, bordering on Walbrook. They made an excavation of no less than one hundred and thirty-nine loads of earth, probably so as to pass sluices of water beneath the latrines from the nearby flowing stream.[10] These latrines were made of stone, even down to the very seats.[11] The public latrines of Fenchurch and the Stocks are the only ones found mentioned for the central parts of the city. But there were still others on the water front. (14) In 1421 the wardmote inquest of Baynard Castle Ward reported the common privy there to be piled up with wood on either side, so that its walls and roof were ruinous and broken.

[1] Charles Welsh, *History of Tower Bridge* (London, 1894), p. 44.
[2] *Supra*, p. 306.
[3] *Cal. Let-bk.* I, 137.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] See page 306.
[6] *Pl. & Mem. Rolls*, A 51, m 4^{r}.
[7] *Ibid.*, m 2^{r}.
[8] *Ibid.*, A 50, m 5^{v}.
[9] *Ibid.*, m 6^{v}.
[10] *Week Book*, I, 311; II, 70.
[11] *Ibid.*, II, 68.

Moreover, divers men fixed their boats and *shoutes* to a post of the said latrine, which was likely to give way.[1] Clearly this latrine also dropped its filth into the Thames. (15) Another common 'wardrobe' is mentioned in a will of the year 1316 as being situated at the 'Wynwharf.'[2] This would seem to have been the wharf of the Three Cranes in Vintry Ward, where the vintners unloaded their wines. (16) Still one other common latrine must not go unnoticed — that of the wool-staple at Westminster, built in 1353–54 on piles over the Thames.[3] It was at this time that Edward III had the wool-staple removed from abroad to Westminster, and built the new Staple there.[4]

Of the sixteen public latrines listed above, numbers (8), (9), and (10) are possibly duplications of others already mentioned. Certainty has, therefore, been established for the existence of at least thirteen mediaeval London public latrines. The fact, however, that a knowledge of even this number has been successfully gleaned from mere incidental documentary evidence clearly indicates that there must have been many more such public conveniences. Likewise the bequest of John Philipot in 1381, in which he had certain tenements revert to the mayor, aldermen, and commonalty of London for the making of conduits, common latrines, and so forth,[5] indicates that a general interest in the establishment of such necessary houses must have been aroused in the minds of certain public-spirited citizens.

Public latrines, however, were not the only ones built over running water. Certain well-to-do citizens eagerly availed themselves of such ready convenience for the clearance of filth from their privies. Walbrook stream, for instance, running down through the centre of the city, seems from early times to have been used as an open sewer, in which people got rid of much dung and other filth and rubbish from their stables and houses; and some of them doubtless also built their latrines over it, although not until 1383 was such a practice permitted by law. As early as 1313–14, and again in 1344–45, certain citizens were required by the assize of nuisances to remove *cloacas* or latrines that they had built over the

[1] *Pl. & Mem. Rolls*, A 50, m 6v.

[2] *Calendar of Wills*, proved and enrolled in the Court of Hustings, London, A.D. 1258–1600, ed. Reginald R. Sharpe (London, 1889), I, 267.

[3] *Exchequer Accounts*, E 101, Bdle. 471, Bo. 8.

[4] *Ibid.* Also *Cal. Let-bk.* G, 16.

[5] *Cal. of Wills*, II, 276. Mr Henry Thomas Riley, editor of *Liber Custumarum*, in discussing the survey of lanes leading to the Thames made in 1344, says: 'The lanes themselves, in many instances appear to have been flanked with one or more latrines, mostly, if not in every instance, of a public nature; a source evidently of great inconvenience to those who had occasion to pass down the lanes for the purpose of embarking, unloading boats, fetching water, or . . . throwing dust and refuse into the Thames' (*Liber Custumarum*, II, Pt. I, p. cix.) And in a footnote he adds, 'These latrines, which in some instances projected over the river, continued to be a prevalent nuisance on the waterside until the Great Fire of London, A.D. 1666' (*Ibid.*).

A reading of the survey shows, however, that only one latrine, that of Queenhithe, is actually mentioned as public; those in several lanes are mentioned as private; and those in three other lanes are left undesignated. There is, therefore, of course, the possibility of some of these last being public privies, since the owners were usually named in such reports in order that they might be held responsible for abating the nuisances.

watercourse.[1] Despite efforts of this sort to prevent the stream from becoming blocked with noxious filth, the practice of building latrines over it seems to have continued and increased, until finally in 1383 the city authorities decided that it should be lawful for persons having houses abutting on the water-course to have latrines built over the stream, provided they did not 'throw rubbish or other refuse through the same, whereby the passage of the said water' might be stopped. Every one who had such a latrine, or latrines, was to pay to the Chamberlain a yearly fee of two shillings towards the expense of keeping the watercourse cleansed.[2]

From this time on the practice of so building private latrines continued unchecked for the greater part of a century, evidently with ever-increasing difficulty and annoyance from the resultant filth blocking up and fouling the watercourse. Finally in 1462–63, the common council ordained that all latrines over Walbrook should be abolished, and that the stream should be paved and vaulted over by the inhabitants owning the land on either side.[3] In 1477, a still further restriction was put on the building of latrines over the city's running waters. The common council passed an ordinance forbidding the making of any 'priveye or sege' not only over Walbrook but also upon any of the town ditches, and ordering the abatement of those already in existence.[4]

As to private latrines built over the city ditches, the records mention only a few. In 1357–58, the Rector of the Church of St Botolph without Aldersgate was summoned before the court of the Assize of Nuisances, because he had allowed to accumulate around his newly built privy, standing over Houndsditch (the city moat) divers filth to the grave inconvenience of individuals passing by.[5] In 1422, in the Ward of Cripplegate Without, a certain man was indicted for having one, and another man for having four, privies over the common waterway running to the city foss or moat, thus seriously stopping up the stream to the great annoyance of the nearby neighbors.[6] There were, therefore, doubtless, a good many other such latrines built over the various city ditches, of which, however, there is no record, because they did not happen to become especially obnoxious.

The building of private latrines over the waters of Fleet River, flowing south into the Thames to the west of the city walls, seems also to have been put under the ban in 1463, the year in which the latrines over Walbrook were abolished; for it was then ordained that all latrines near *lez gitties* of Bridewell should be destroyed, and that those charged with casting filth into Fleet Ditch (around Fleet Prison) should cleanse the parts of the ditch abutting on their own premises.[7]

The casting of filth into Fleet Prison ditch had more than once been the subject of complaint and protest on the part of the king; for the Fleet was not a city prison, but stood just beyond the city limits, and was directly under the jurisdiction of the king. In 1355 Edward III ordered the city to hold an inquest concern-

[1] *Miscellaneous* DD, preserved in the Guildhall Rec. Off. (London), m 22r, and m 57v.
[2] *Memorials*, pp. 478–479.
[3] *Cal. Let.-bk.* L, 21.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[5] *Miscellaneous* FF, m 3r.
[6] *Pl. & Mem. Rolls*, 51, m 3r.
[7] *Cal. Let-bk.* L, 37.

ing those citizens causing obnoxiously unsanitary conditions greatly endangering the health of the Fleet prisoners. The jurors found that, whereas the ditch should have been ten feet wide and running at a depth sufficient to float a boat laden with a tun of wine, it was now quite choked up with filth from latrines, eleven in all, and of sewers, three in number, discharging into it. To build these latrines, certain citizens had appropriated the ditch along their premises to the width of from one to three feet. One stream of water, lawfully, it is true, gushing out into the ditch had, however, been utilized to carry off dung and other filth; while two other streams containing divers filthy matters poured down into the ditch where they ought not to have been. So deeply had the filfth from these nuisances accumulated that the water from Fleet Stream could no longer flood the prison ditch nor flow around the prison.[1]

Now the mention of these three sewers at once suggests the possibility, even probability, of the citizens who utilized them having arranged for themselves water clearance of filth from kitchens, or from privies, or from both. With a sufficient supply of water available there was no reason why wealthy citizens should not have reproduced in miniature the sewerage system that was installed so many years earlier in Westminster Palace.

Evidently the ditch of Fleet Prison was cleaned and the various nuisances abated, for nothing more was heard of the danger of unsanitary conditions until 1388–89. In that year the king sent a writ to the sheriffs of London complaining of one, William Ervyn, clerk, having recently built divers latrines on his soil opposite Fleet Prison and of his intending to construct others, from all of which the filth would descend into the waters and the air would be corrupted to the grave inconvenience and discomfort of the prisoners and of those who visited them — their friends and pious doers-of-good-works distributing alms.[2] The mayor, Nicholas Extone, replied, acknowledging receipt of the writ, and stating that, before it came, the said William Ervyn had made a certain stone wall opposite Fleet Prison on his own soil, where the water of the tide rose and fell, and where he was intending to make latrines. In this wall he had also made certain openings extending down into the water, which were for the clearance of the latrines; but he had so far placed no filth in these openings. The mayor assured the king that all such nuisances, for which the city was responsible, should be abated through the regular process of viewing by the mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen, as from time out of mind.[3]

This reply is important in that it gives some idea as to how at least some of the latrines along running streams were constructed to facilitate clearance of filth; and it also indicates that Fleet Stream around Fleet Prison — whatever reversions to latrine nuisances may have occurred in the early part of the sixteenth century[4] — was kept clear of privies long before the general prohibitions of 1463

[1] *Memorials*, p. 280.

[2] *Chancery Miscellanea*, preserved in the archives of the Pub. Rec. Off. (London), 110–119.

[3] *Ibid.*, 110–119.

[4] In 1502 the king commissioned the mayor of London and others to inquire by jury of the city into the stoppage of Fleet Ditch by filth from latrines built upon it and by other rubbish thrown into

and 1477. Indeed, such restrictions were probably enforced around the prison from 1355 on through most of the fifteenth century.

Another prison latrine, that of Ludgate, should be mentioned. This privy, ordinarily having voidance and cleansing of its filth into the town ditch (moat) on the north part of the prison, had such water clearance prevented in 1441 by the buildings of one Nicholas Clement dwelling next the prison. On the complaint of the keeper of the prison, the city authorities agreed to see to it that the said Clement allowed such water clearance to continue.[1] So much, then, for latrines built over city watercourses and ditches.

Certain people, however, either officially of influence or else so conveniently situated as not to create any nuisance for neighbors might well have used such method of water clearance for their latrines as above described. Indeed, in the *Hustings Roll* for 1402, an example is found for the Parish of St Michael of Crooked Lane in Bridge Ward. Here extending from Thames Street to the river, a distance of two hundred and thirty-three feet, stood buildings later to become Fishmongers' Hall, though in 1402 divided into five separate tenements all owned by stockfishmongers, and still earlier owned by the wealthy and philanthropic stockfishmonger, John Lovekyn, mayor of London in 1365–66, and after his death by his one-time apprentice, William Walworth, mayor in 1374 and again in 1380. Now the *Hustings Roll* states that William Walworth had built within his tenements there a certain tower, and within the south wall of that tower a latrine, set into the wall a depth of one foot, five inches, and a length of five feet, one inch. Outside the wall and to the south of the tower, the latrine was eleven feet wide from east to west, and fourteen feet long to the river Thames.[2] Undoubtedly this latrine, somewhat after the tower or turret type previously mentioned, had easy clearance of filth by means of the Thames water without any inconvenience to other citizens.

But so advantageous was the water clearance of privy filth felt to be that there were not lacking those who tried to release the issues from their latrines into the common gutters. For instance, in 1314–15, a certain Alice Wade was summoned before the mayor for thus creating a nuisance. From her privy chamber in the solar (upstairs) of her house in the Parish of St Michael, Queenhithe, she had run a wooden pipe to the common gutter from of old passing down from the public lane and beneath divers houses (*sub domib, diu' sor'*) for the purpose of receiving the rainwater and drippings from the said houses and from the gutters of the said lane. Thus through this wooden pipe she had been casting the filth of her privy into the common gutter, so that it had become more often blocked up and was so fouled as to become a vile nuisance to all the neighbors beneath whose houses it passed.[3] Alice was therefore forced to remove the pipe within forty days, the usual time limit for the abatement of nuisances.

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it, to the great danger of infection of the prisoners, etc. (*Pat. Rolls* 17 Hen. 7, Pt. II M 1 (36). Footnote reference from E. Williams, *Early Holborn and the Legal Quarter of London.* A Topographical Survey . . . 2 vols. (London, 1927), p. 219.

[1] *Cal. Let.-bk.* K, 254–255.

[2] *Hustings Roll,* 131 (25).

[3] *Misc.* DD, m 24r.

Other citizens, however, not so advantageously situated, may have attempted water clearance of privies in another way. According to a deed dated February, 1449–50, in the Guildhall Library (London), Thomas Brightfield was to make at his own expense within the house where he lived in the Parish of St Martin, Vintry Ward, a chimney for a kitchen, a cistern of lead, with a lead pipe in the wall to Narrow Lane, and a privy of stone in the stone wall.[1] Now this cistern was doubtless intended as a receptacle for rainwater collected from the roof, and the pipe as a vent for the excess water accruing during heavy rains, leading it down to the public gutter. An example of just such a vent pipe is found — for a century and a half later, it is true — in the description of the first crude valve watercloset invented in 1596 by Sir John Harrington.

Harrington prided himself on having overcome the unpleasant odors of privies by providing a temporary bowl-like receptacle into which was run from a reservoir, or cistern — provided with an overflow pipe — water to a depth of two feet so as to cover all human excrement falling into it. If the supply of water was plentiful, this receptacle was to be opened frequently from the bottom, so as to let all the filth flow down into the permanent cesspool, which was thus cut off from all but momentary contamination of the air of the privy. If, on the other hand, water was not plentiful, the receptacle was to be opened and refilled at least once a day.[2] Such, indeed, was the beginning of the modern valve water-closet with its temporary receptacle, or bowl, now flushed and refilled with water each time that it is used.

Yet, though Sir John Harrington claims the honor of having invented the first crude valve system of privy flushing, it does not follow that he was the first to use any form of piped water flush for clearance of privy filth. Indeed, the house of John Brightfield may well have had just such a flush system. In it there was to be a cistern, evidently with even an excess of water at times, since it was to have an overflow pipe down to the public gutter. There was also to be a stone privy within the stone wall, perhaps the wall of the chimney, since the latter was the only new masonry to be built; and its flues, of course, passed down through the thickness of the wall to the underground cesspool. Such a flushing system might have been used not only for the privy filth but also for all the slops of the kitchen and of the household; for at least one other instance has been found on record of a tenement in mediaeval London so disposing (in a single cess-pool) of the rainwater from the roof and the 'liquors' and filth (*putredines*) from the household.[3] Moreover in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was not uncommon for filth to be flushed from London kitchens through pipes, sometimes, indeed, to the nuisance of neighbors.[4]

But to return to the question of privies in chimneys. A Hustings will for the year 1324 throws some light on how such may have been arranged. Henry 'le Gaugeur' bequeathed to his wife his cellar in the Parish of St Michaels of Paternoster Church, along with certain rooms built over it; namely, a small hall, a room called a parlor, a chamber with a chimney, an alley leading to a *cloaca*, and

[1] *Guildhall Library Deed* 42[v]. [2] *Under Eight Reigns*, Chap. II, 'The Metamorphosis of Ajax.'
[3] *Misc.* DD, mm 53[v], 55[r]; and FF, m 31[r]. [4] *Ibid.*, DD, m 62[v].

the *cloaca* itself.[1] This alley was evidently one of those narrow passages such as lead to *garderobes* situated in towers and turrets. It probably led around to the back of the chimney where latrine flues were constructed within the chimney wall. Still another Hustings will for the year 1365–66 tells of a certain long chamber provided with a chimney and a latrine.[2]

Still further interesting information concerning the construction of *garderobe* within the masonry of houses is found in a building contract for the year 1342. The mason was to dig beneath the place belonging to William Marbrer, vintner, in Paternoster Row in the Parish of St Michael-ate-Corn, an excavation seventeen feet deep, and to make at the end thereof in the northwest corner beneath the floor, a vault with a *garderobe*, the same to be built of chalk and the pipe thereof of stone. The walls of the cellar vault (not of the privy) were to be of good ragstone as high as the first jettie (i.e., the first projecting storey); and in each end of the cellar was to be built a chimney carried up to the height of the jettie in stone.[3] Now whether the chimney standing in the cellar end near the privy projected so as actually to form part of its enclosure or was in any way connected with it, one cannot say. But it is clear that the privy had a deep, vaulted cesspool built of chalk, with a stone flue into it for the passage of filth. A cellar such as this one, of course, with its fireplaces, was really an English basement, the walls of which rose two feet above the pavement and had four windows overlooking the street.[4]

Mention of other such privies with pipes is not infrequent. In 1308, William de Hanigtone, skinner, had a large house built, in the cellar of which were two enclosures across under the hall, and one enclosure for the *cloaca*, which had two pipes.[5] In 1310 three shops in Fleet Street had above them two chambers with a *garderobe* adjoining, an arrangement that would have necessitated a pipe to carry the filth down to the cesspool.[6] The *Hustings Roll* for 1316–17 tells of two shops in the Parish of St Nicholas, Coldharbor, that had in connection with them a two-storeyed stone-walled *garderobe*.[7] An *Assize of Nuisance* for 1330–31 tells of how William Abel and his wife had had the use of a certain privy, the pipe of which lawfully ran into the neighbor's cesspool (*puteum*); but the neighbor had wrongfully removed both the privy and the pipe, which he was accordingly obliged to replace.[8] Another *Assize of Nuisance*, for 1347–48, tells of how two men living in a solar above another man's cellar extended the pipe of their privy, situated in the solar, so as to let the filth run into the cellar and occupy the whole of it, a nuisance which they were ordered to abate.[9] Still other examples of privies with pipes might be given.

Other data, however, proving the common use of this type of privy can be found in abundance in the accounts of the wardens of London Bridge Estate. In these accounts the entries concerning latrine pipes are numerous; but almost

[1] *Cal. of Wills*, I, 322.
[2] *Hustings Rolls*, 93 (150).
[3] *London Bridge Deed*, preserved in Guildhall Rec. Off., Pt. fol. G 16.
[4] Specified in the deed.
[5] *Memorials*, pp. 65, 66.
[6] *Hustings Rolls*, 39, m 102r.
[7] *Ibid.*, 45, m 26r.
[8] *Misc.* DD, m 44r.
[9] *Misc.* DD, m 61r.

without exception those mentioned were made of pipe-boards, not necessarily because stone pipes were never used in the latrines of the London Bridge tenements, but probably because the many wooden pipes in use frequently wore out and had to be replaced.[1] In one instance no less than one hundred and seventy feet of pipe-board for latrines was bought.[2] In another instance, however, there were purchased two latrine pipes of plaster.[3]

The privies of the London Bridge Estate tenements usually had deep cesspools, a fact which is amply illustrated both by references to the building of new latrines and by numerous entries concerning latrine cleaning. For the year 1390–91 the following entries are found concerning the building of a new latrine for a tenement at Fenchurch:[4] For the carting away of sixty loads of earth . . . 10s. For two men digging for two and a half days each at 6d a day . . . 2s 6d For a certain mason making the stone walls of the latrine, 23s 4d. Also, in 1391–92, for a certain mason making a new latrine in a certain house at St Nicholas Shambles, digging the pit, and finding the stone, tile, and cement for the work . . . £4.[5] Again, in 1396–97, for the same mason making a new latrine in another tenement at the shambles, digging the pit, taking away the earth, and finding the lime, sand, and all other material, and also for his removing a chimney there and placing it elsewhere . . . £5 6s 8d.[6] Now, when it is taken into consideration that the average wage of even skilled laborers at this time was not over 6d to 7d a day,[7] it will readily be seen that these latrines were really expensive establishments. For instance, the £4 paid for the work and material put into the latrine built in 1391–92 equalled the wages for from around one hundred and forty to one hundred and sixty days' skilled labor. Such latrines, even though each built for the convenience of a whole tenement with all its tenants, must have been looked upon as rather pretentious utilities of which the owners were justly proud.

Still further insight is gained into the size of various latrines by a study of account items of the London Bridge Estate dealing with privy-cleaning ranging over a period of thirty-seven years, from 1382–1419. At first the cost of cleaning was merely stated in a round sum without any specification as to amount of filth removed. For example, for the cleaning of individual privies, 16s 8d, . . . 6s, . . . 10s, . . . 46s 8d, . . . 26s 8d, . . . 30s, . . . and 13s 4d; and for the cleaning of two privies at a time, 30s, . . . 53s 4d, . . . and 17s 4d.[8] In 1411–12, however, the payments to Henry Ivory, privy cleaner, began to be entered along with the number of pipes (or else tuns) of filth removed. (Pipes, the vessels used at that time, and, indeed, still used in various parts of rural England, for carrying away the filth from privy cesspools, each equalled ½ tun, or 2 hogsheads, or 4 barrels.)

[1] *Accounts of the Masters of London Bridge*, Roll 6, m 9; 7, m 10; 11, m 12; 14, m 8; 15, m 9; 17, m 3; *Week Book* I, 152.

[2] Roll, 2 m 7.

[3] *Week Book*, II, 356.

[4] *Bridge Mast. Acc'ts.*, roll 11, m 9.

[5] *Bridge Mast. Acc'ts.* rolls 10, m 14; 11, m 6.

[6] See wages of plasterers, tilers, and daubers. (*Ibid.*, rolls 1, m 6; and 6, m 12.)

[7] *Ibid.*, roll 15, m 7.

[8] *Ibid.*, rolls 1, m 10; 10, m 14. *Week Book* I, 27, 140, 169, 174, and 229. Also rolls 2, m 7; 16, m 1; and *Week Book* I, 32.

Henry Ivory was paid such sums as the following: For 23 pipes . . . 41s 8d. For 8 pipes . . . 16s. For 31 pipes, at 20d a pipe (specified) . . . 51s 8d. For 4 pipes . . . 8s. For 24 pipes . . . 40s. For 5 tuns with carriage . . . 23s 4d.[1] Though it is stated in only one entry, these prices may be assumed in each and every instance to include carriage. The reason for the prices varying from 3s 4d a tun for the larger cleanings to 4s and 4s 8d for the smaller may, of course, be merely a matter of the usual lower price for larger quantity. Be that as it may, it is interesting to compare these prices with that set about fifty years later (1466) by the city authorities. In that year John Lovegold petitioned the city authorities to grant him a monopoly of the clearing of all privies within the city for a term of ten years at 2s 6d a tun, because, he said, the business had hitherto been done imperfectly and at an exhorbitant charge. The authorities finally granted him the monopoly, but at only 2s 2d a tun, a much lower price, indeed, than that paid to Henry Ivory by the wardens of London Bridge.[2]

As to at what time during the twenty-four hours of the day these privies were cleaned, little evidence has been obtained; but, such as it is, it all points to the general practice being carried on at night. For instance, in 1412–13, the London Bridge wardens paid for candle and packthread bought for repair of a latrine by night, 4d.[3] Another and much more interesting case, taken from the *Exchequer Accounts* for 1281,[4] tells of the cleaning by night of the *cloaca* of Newgate Gaol, and the repair of the privy, the job taking in all five nights. Expenses were listed (1) for *cleys* (hurdles), boards, a ladder, and lights; (2) for timber, nails, and carpenter's work for making two doors to the entrance to the gaol (i.e., from the privy), and for repairing and newly making the seat of the privy; and (3) for stone, sand, lime, and mason's work in repairing the breach made in the stone wall, in order to remove the privy filth, and in strengthening the tower over the *cloaca*. (4) Thirteen men worked five nights cleaning the cesspool, while four watchmen, hired for four nights, stood at the gap made in the wall, to prevent escape of any prisoners. The wages of the privy-cleaners were 7d each a night; while those of the masons were only 5d. Lights for carrying on the work cost 8d; and the cost of all labor and materials used totalled £4 7s 8d. The largest single item of expense was 32s 6d, for the actual cleaning of the cesspool, a sum considerably less than was often paid by the wardens of London Bridge for similar jobs a century later; but then, it is true, wages were considerably higher after the beginning of the outbreaks of Black Death (1348–49).

Taken as a whole, this extensive piece of work carried through successfully at night in Newgate Prison was quite as large as any undertaken by the cleaners of the privies of the London Bridge Estate tenements. It was performed at night, in part at least, because the privies were in daily use—the mere guarding against the escape of prisoners could have been done much more easily during daylight. Moreover it was entirely for this reason that the wardens of London Bridge in 1412–13 had a privy repaired at night.

But it must not be assumed that citizens of mediaeval London found the evil

[1] *Bridge Mast. Acc'ts, Wk. Bk.* I, 364; II, 18, 91, 129, 304.
[2] *Cal. Let-bk.* L, 67.
[3] *Bridge Mast. Acc'ts. Wk. Bk.*, II, 23.
[4] E 101–467, no 11.

odors arising from removal of privy filth any less obnoxious than did the Londoners of 1671, the year when the common council enacted that no 'goung-fermer' should carry ordure till after ten o'clock in winter and eleven o'clock in summer at night, and also provided a penalty of 13s 4d against any of them convicted of spilling such filth in the streets.[1] There is, indeed, every reason to believe that the general practice of night cleaning was established long before the law was actually put on the city books. Doubtless the wardens of London Bridge, and also the owners of other large tenements and household establishments throughout the city, regularly had their privy cesspools cleaned during the night time. True it is that there were often nuisances created by the more careless and shiftless classes living in the slummier parts of the city; but, on the whole, the better class of citizens seem to have given serious thought to the care and cleaning of their privies, a point of view, which is also borne out by the fact that some of them provided for such matters even in their wills.[2]

Now, though it has been shown that the more well-to-do citizens usually tried to lessen the stench in their privies by having the chamber connected with the cesspool only by pipe, it should not be overlooked that many privies, especially of the poorer people, must have been placed directly over the cesspools with only the floor between. Such, for instance, was the type of privy in which, according to the *Coroners' Roll* for 1326, Richard the Raker was drowned. After Richard had entered the privy and had seated himself, the rotten planks of the floor gave way, letting him fall into the deep cesspool filth. There his body was found by William Scott, his fellow raker.[3]

Another fatal accident in connection with a cesspool must be mentioned, in order to show how some of the more humble of these receptacles were sometimes made. In the courtyard of a certain house in Bread Street Ward, two men had dug a privy well to the depth of five casks — literally so, since they had cribbed it by placing within it, one upon the other, five casks, in which new wine had been kept. As one of the boards from the end of one of the casks had fallen to the bottom of the well, one of the men put down a ladder and began to descend, only to be overcome by the fumes (carbon dioxide) of the wine-soaked staves, so that he dropped unconscious to the bottom. The other man descended to rescue him, only to fall in like manner, so that both were asphyxiated.[4]

Now here was a cesspool probably twenty feet deep — at any rate, deep enough to require a ladder for one to descend to the bottom; yet (as a cask contains approximately two barrels) the whole cesspool contained only the space of about ten barrels — a small receptacle, indeed, when compared with some of the larger cesspools of the London Bridge Estate tenements, from which, when cleaned, the filth filled from one hundred to one hundred and twenty barrels.[5]

[1] *An Act of the Common Council of the City of London, 1671*, preserved in the Guildhall Library, p. 28.

[2] *Hust. Rolls*, 36 (79); 76 (246).

[3] *Cal. Coroners Rolls of City of London, A.D. 1300–1378*, ed. Reginald R. Sharpe (London, 1913), p. 168.

[4] *Cal. Let-bk.* B, 277.

[5] *Vide supra*, p. 26. It is not surprising that into such large cesspools the bodies of murdered people were, on more than one occasion, thrown; for these deep wells took several years to be filled, and

The topography of London, indeed, was in some respects well adapted to the use of deep privy wells. Sloping for miles from the north of the city down to the Thames River lay a thin layer of clay over deep gravel; and it was into this gravel that most of the cesspools dipped down, so that they had ready release for the liquid part of their contents.[1]

Whatever contamination resulted to the waters of the numerous city wells, the cesspool system continued, and in fact came into more common use, partly, no doubt, because of the ever-growing public opinion against the discharge of privy filth into the streams, ditches, and open sewers of a city growing ever more densely populated. The restrictions ordained in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were maintained and even strengthened. According to the *Statute of the Streets* (1633), no man was to make any 'widrawes' in any of the town ditches or town gullets under penalty of 20s;[2] and, according to the *Act of Common Council* (1671), no man was to 'make or continue any widraughts, Seat, or Seats, for Houses of Easement over, or Dreins' into any of the common sewers without licence of the commissioners for the time being, under penalty of 40s a month for so long time as they should be continued after warning.[3] Now, it is true, that, in the mention of the 'licence' there is the implication that people of wealth and of influence could, in certain instances, obtain the privilege of releasing their privy filth into certain of the city sewers; but the severe penalties attached to so doing without licence also indicate clearly that it was a rare practice.

Even after 1834, when at last there began to be organized a fairly adequate system of underground sewers, the privy cesspools of houses were neither abolished nor yet allowed to be connected with these sewers except on payment of a special fee of 17s 6d. No one was compelled to drain his house; and, even when he did so, he was forbidden under penalty to connect his privy cesspool, even as an overflow, with the sewer.[4] The reason for such restriction was, of course, that sewers were not as yet trapped to keep down evil odors, and sewer gas often entered the houses.[5]

The avoiding of evil odors, however, brought to the city the much more deadly menace of contaminated wells, a menace, which doubtless existed, though in less degree, in the much smaller London of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, and which continued to exist down even to 1866 (and after) — the year when the commissioners of sewers finally brought in a genuinely scientific report concerning the contamination of city wells. The cool, sparkling waters of these wells, it was found, were often preferred by people to the piped water of the two city companies; but the very sparkle of such waters was due to the

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meanwhile the criminal could have made good his escape, if the murder had not been otherwise found out, before the privy was cleaned and the remains of the victim were discovered. (*Assize Roll* 547[a], mm 29[v], 31[v], and 49[v].

[1] John W. Tripe, *The Sanitary Condition and Laws of Medieval and Modern London* (London, 1881), p. 15.

[2] John Stowe, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* . . . Since reprinted and augumented by the author and afterwards by A.M., H.D., and others (London, 1633), p. 666.

[3] P. 29. [4] Tripe, *op. cit.*, p. 15. [5] *Ibid.*

presence of ammonia and other organic matter in solution. Among various causes of such contamination was the frequent pollution of wells by privy filth, resulting in outbreaks of cholera and malignant fevers among patrons of affected waters.[1] Such outbreaks, of course, must also have been by no means infrequent in mediaeval London.

If, however, the mediaeval Londoner was, for the most part, blind and indifferent to this less obvious source of danger to health, he was quite aware of the obnoxious nuisances arising at times from the proximity of privy cesspools. Hence it was that from of old the city had established ordinances governing their construction. Every cesspool was to be built at least two and a half feet from the neighbor's soil, even though walled with stone; and, if walled merely with earth, at least three and a half feet.[2]

The need of such an ordinance is well exemplified in the rolls of the *Assize of Nuisances* for the thirteenth, fourteenth, and the early part of the fifteenth centuries. It is true that the special nuisances arising from the privy cesspools being placed too close to the party lines do not strike one as numerous, if considered in relation to the number of decades covered in the rolls; but they were at times exceedingly obnoxious. For instance, in 1328–29, Adam Mere and his brother William, living without Aldgate, were summoned before the assize on the complaint of William Sprot that they had a *cloaca* next his tenement, which was full of filth to overflowing, so that the dung together with the urine from the cesspool penetrated his wall, entered his house, and collected there, making a great fetor. In especial did he suffer damage thus daily, because the pit of the said *cloaca* was not distant from his wall the space of two and a half feet, as it ought to have been. Needless to say, the assize ordered an immediate abatement of the nuisance.[3] Similarly in 1344–45, the filth of a latrine in Fridaystreet was found, through fault in the thickness of the wall in the tenement of the owner, to have penetrated the wall of the neighbor and to have defiled all his tenement. The assize therefore ordered the wall immediately repaired.[4] Still other similar examples could be cited. Nevertheless the occurrence of such nuisances seems to have been comparatively rare.

But London citizens could complain upon occasion of much milder forms of nuisances. For example, in 1399–1400, Robert Asshecombe, broiderer, living in the Parish of St Albans, Woodstreet, complained before the Assize of Nuisance against the evil odors coming from his neighbor's latrines through certain openings in the privies toward his property, and the nuisance had to be abated.[5] Similarly in 1421, the privy of a certain tenement in the Parish of St Andrews, Billingsgate Ward, was indicted by the wardmote jury because of the great stench coming from it into the public street, to the great nuisance of people.[6]

[1] *Commissioners of Sewers Reports* (Copy in the Guildhall Library), 1866, No. 17.

[2] *Liber Albus*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London, *Rolls Series*, 1859), pp. 323–24. Also *Misc.* DD, m 36r.

[3] *Misc.* DD, m 41v.

[4] *Ibid.*, m 57v.

[5] *Misc.* II, m 7v.

[6] *Pl. & Mem. Roll*, A 50, m 6.

But a different type of nuisance, that of encroaching with privies on the common soil of the city, seems to have persisted for centuries, for the most part in the too often disreputable lanes leading down to the Thames, and in certain suburbs beyond the city walls. In 1279–80, in Coventislane, Vintry Ward, where certain houses had been built encroaching on the lane two feet for a distance of thirty feet, the outlets of three *cloacae* — possibly overflow pipes from cesspools — had been constructed; and were ordered removed by the sheriffs.[1] Similarly in the survey of the lanes leading to the Thames, made in 1344, a public Watergate, Tower Ward (?), was found stopped up by reason of a gutter issuing from a latrine and also a palisade built there.[2] Such a gutter, of course, may have afforded water clearance for the latrine, or, on the other hand, may have been merely an overflow pipe.

Certain other latrine nuisances indicated in this survey of 1344 were exceptionally obnoxious. Both Ebbegate and Dowgate Lanes had been unlawfully closed to the public by certain citizens who, in order the more effectively to prevent citizens using them, had constructed divers latrines, in Ebbegate upon gratings, and in Dowgate projecting beyond the pathway, so that in each lane the filth fell upon persons passing through.[3] Similar, if less repulsive latrine nuisances were also reported for other lanes leading to the Thames. That these nuisances persisted permanently, despite the investigation of 1344, is evident from the fact that the reports of city wardmotes for the years 1421 and 1422 reveal much the same encroachment of privies in many of the same lanes.[4]

Few such encroachments seem to have happened elsewhere. In 1352, however, a piece of public land sixteen feet wide was appropriated by William de Stratton to build upon without Ludgate, where he also made a deep pit and a *quadratum* for a latrine. He was therefore forced to pay to the city a yearly rent of 2s.[5] Again, in 1357–58, certain people living within the yard of the Church of St Lawrence, Old Jewry, near the Guildhall, went through a great gate belonging to the church and built their *garderobes* on common soil, past which the mayor, aldermen, and others going to and from the Guildhall had to travel, to their great annoyance. This nuisance was promptly abated by compelling the rector of the church to close the great gate so that the people could no longer use this piece of commons.[6]

It may or may not be of any significance that the last two nuisances cited occurred during the years immediately following on the first terrible outbreak of Black Death, a time when the city government would seem to have been considerably weakened and disorganized.[7] So greatly, indeed, did city cleaning and ordinary regulations for city sanitation fall into abeyance during the plague year of 1349, that the king was forced to write the city authorities protesting against human feces and other obnoxious filth lying about in the streets and lanes, where it was being cast from the houses both by day and by night, so that the air of the

[1] *Assize Roll* 547[a], m 24[r].
[2] *Liber Custumarum*, ii, Pt. II, 446–447.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 449–450.
[4] *Pl. & Mem. Rolls*, A 50 m 6[v]; 51 m 4[r].
[5] *Lib. Cust.*, ii, Pt. II, 454.
[6] *Misc.* FF, m 5[v].
[7] Even as late as 1357 when the city authorities petitioned the king to lighten the burden of taxes, they stated that the city still was one-third empty from the plague of 1348–49. (*Let.-bk.* G. 85.)

city was polluted with foul odors to the great peril of citizens during that time of prevailing sickness; and he ordered all such filth to be immediately removed.[1]

Even in normal times, however, the removal of privy filth from mediaeval London was bound to give rise to frequent nuisances. Though the average well-to-do citizen doubtless hired a professional privy cleaner — even as did the wardens of London Bridge — to clean his privy and to cart away the filth by night either to the proper laystalls beyond the city limits or else to the dung-boats on the river front commonly used to bear away such matter, yet too much was left to the initiative of the individual and too little responsibility was taken in the way of close and constant supervision by the city, to prevent lazy and careless people from frequently dumping privy, and other, filth into out-of-the-way suburban lanes, the city water-courses, or along the banks of the Thames.[2] Indeed, the unsightly condition of the river banks in this respect seems frequently to have annoyed the king coming by boat from Westminster to London Tower, and to have called forth his indignant protests.[3]

Yet the prominent place given to such offences in the various legal records of the city should not lead one to conclude that the whole of mediaeval London was frequently and extremely filthy, even according to the standards of cleanliness and sanitation that it was then possible to achieve. In the more well-to-do and respectable parts of the city, the citizens usually did what lay in their power to abate nuisances arising from privy (as well as other) filth, so that outside the privies, at least, there were seldom annoying odors either entering the rooms of the houses or floating on the city air. And even within certain privies — such as that of William Walworth near the Thames — there must have been little to offend the sense of smell. For the majority of prosperous citizens, however, privies with pipes and cesspools, and with, at times, cisterns of water to facilitate clearance of filth, were the best available arrangement; and these it was impossible to keep entirely free from tainted air, since no water-flush system with odor trap had as yet been devised. If citizens are to be judged by the time and money expended in their efforts to make their latrines comfortable, clean, and sanitary, then many citizens of mediaeval London must have deserved wholehearted praise and respect.

MUNCIE, INDIANA.

[1] *Cal. Close Rolls* (149–54), pp. 65–66.

[2] For example, in 1421, Watergatestreet against Berelane, Tower Ward, was reported by the wardmote as being used by people as a dumping place for ordure of privies. (*Pl. & Mem. Roll*, A 50, m 7^{v}.)

[3] *Memorials*, pp. 205–296; *Cal. Close Rolls*, preserved in the Pub. Rec. Off. (London, *Rolls Series* 1911), (1392–96), p. 133; *Rotuli Parliamentorum ut et Petitiones, et Placita in Parliamento Tempore Richardi.* Ric. I ad finem Henrici VII (London, 1767–77), III, 306^{v}.